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## HENNEPIN CANAL PARKWAY TRAVEL GUIDE

Western Main Line

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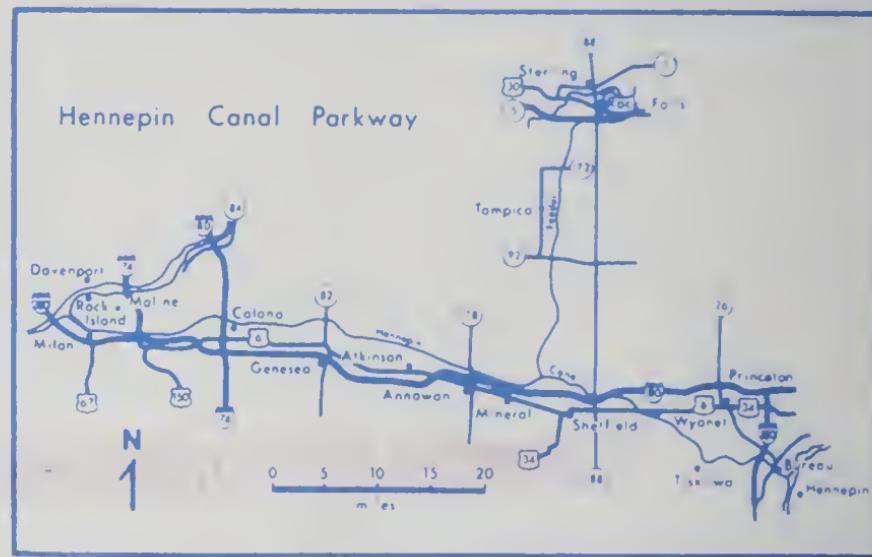
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CONSERVATION

## Western Main Line

The Hennepin Canal Parkway is a unique, ninety-six mile, 4,300-acre waterway corridor in northwestern Illinois. Formerly known as the Illinois-Mississippi Canal, but more commonly called the Hennepin Canal, the main line of the waterway extended from the great bend of the Illinois River to the Mississippi River west of Milan. A feeder from the Rock River at Rock Falls supplied water to the main line.

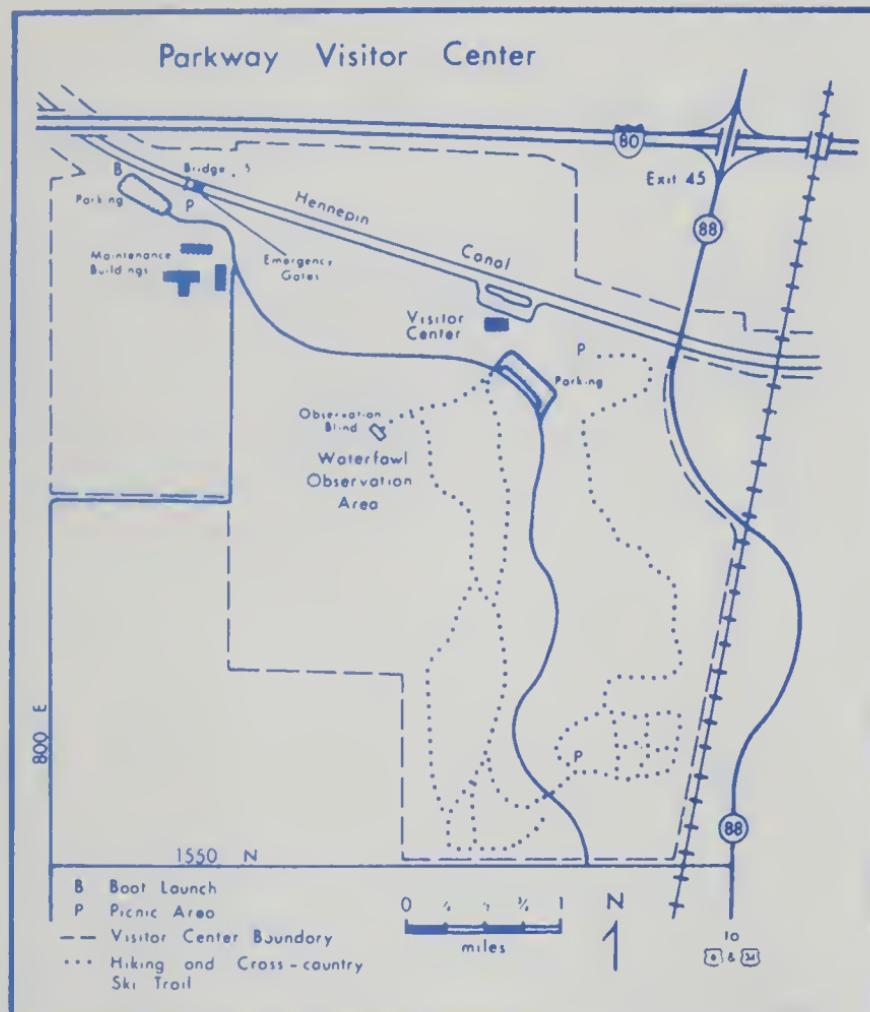


Land acquisition and construction of the canal by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began in 1890 and was completed in 1907. The canal served as a commercial waterway from 1907 to July of 1951, when it was closed to navigation. During the next two decades, the corps performed standby maintenance while negotiations were taking place for transfer of the waterway to the state. In 1970, the transfer was completed and the canal was placed under the supervision of the Illinois Department of Conservation.

The parkway is a popular recreational area for sport fishing, pleasure boating, picnicking, primitive camping, horseback riding, snowmobiling, backpacking, and hiking. In 1976, the Hennepin Canal Visitor Center was opened at a 400-acre recreational site northeast of Sheffield. The site includes an information center with displays and restroom facilities, a hiking and cross-country ski trail, a waterfowl observation area, a boat launch ramp, marina, picnic areas, playground equipment, one of the remaining canal truss bridges, and emergency gates that were used to stop the flow of water if a break occurred in one of the canal banks.



## Parkway Visitor Center



Hennepin Canal Visitor Center

Work on the western main line began in 1897 and, unlike the eastern main line, presented few construction problems other than the need to build five aqueducts where the canal crossed local streams. As constructed, the western main line consisted

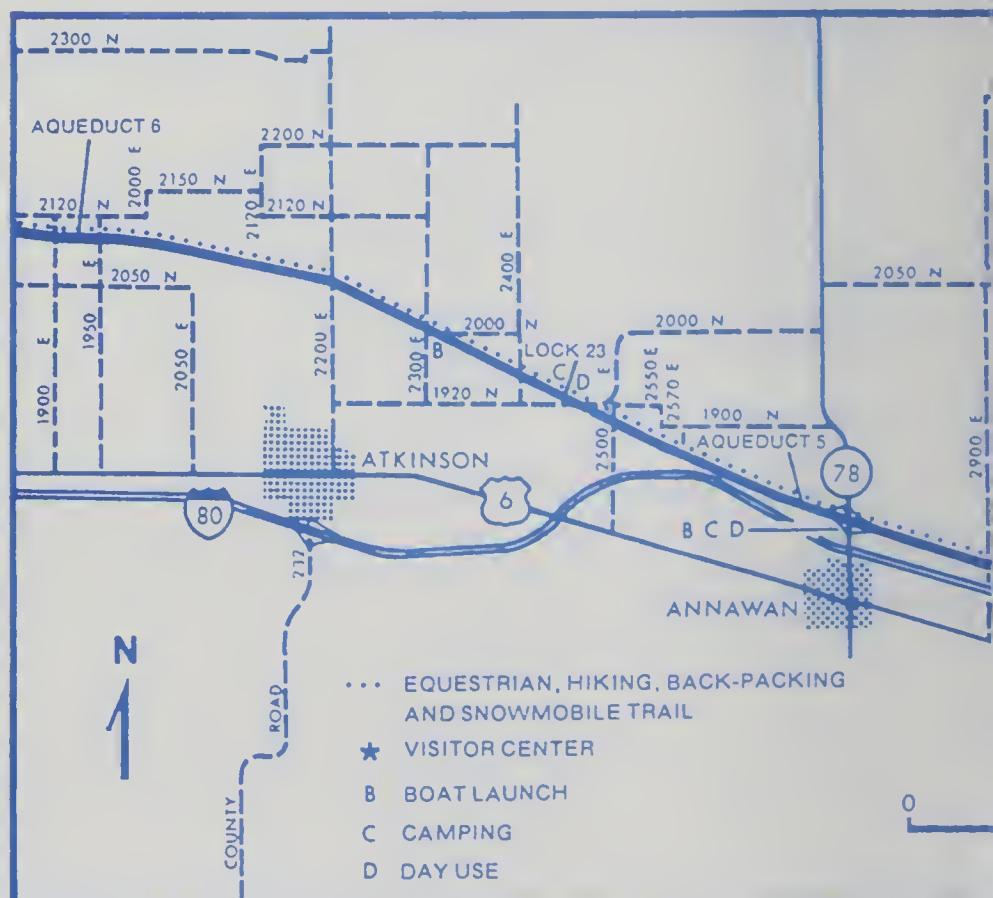
of two sections: the area from the feeder basin to the Rock River west of Green Rock, and a four and one-half mile route that bypassed the lower rapids of the Rock River at Milan. The Rock River served as the canal route between Green Rock and Milan. This portion of the original canal route is not under the jurisdiction of the Illinois Department of Conservation.

One of three remaining overseer's houses is a short distance west of the visitor center on County Road 645E north of Sheffield. The two-story frame structure has been occupied continuously since it was built near the turn of the century.

The canal feeder connects with the main line between Sheffield and Mineral. The feeder basin, also called the summit pool, may be reached by a number of county roads. One mile west of the basin at County roads 1750N and 300E is Lock 22. The lock has been restored to its original condition, and has a girder lift bridge on the downstream end, a day use area and a primitive camping site, and a boat launch ramp.

Mineral Prairie is a 9.5-acre remnant of bluejoint grass along the north canal bank between Lock 22 and Aqueduct 4. The aqueduct is north of Mineral, less than one-half mile east of County Road 120E.

An equestrian, hiking, backpacking, and snowmobile trail extends east and west on the canal main



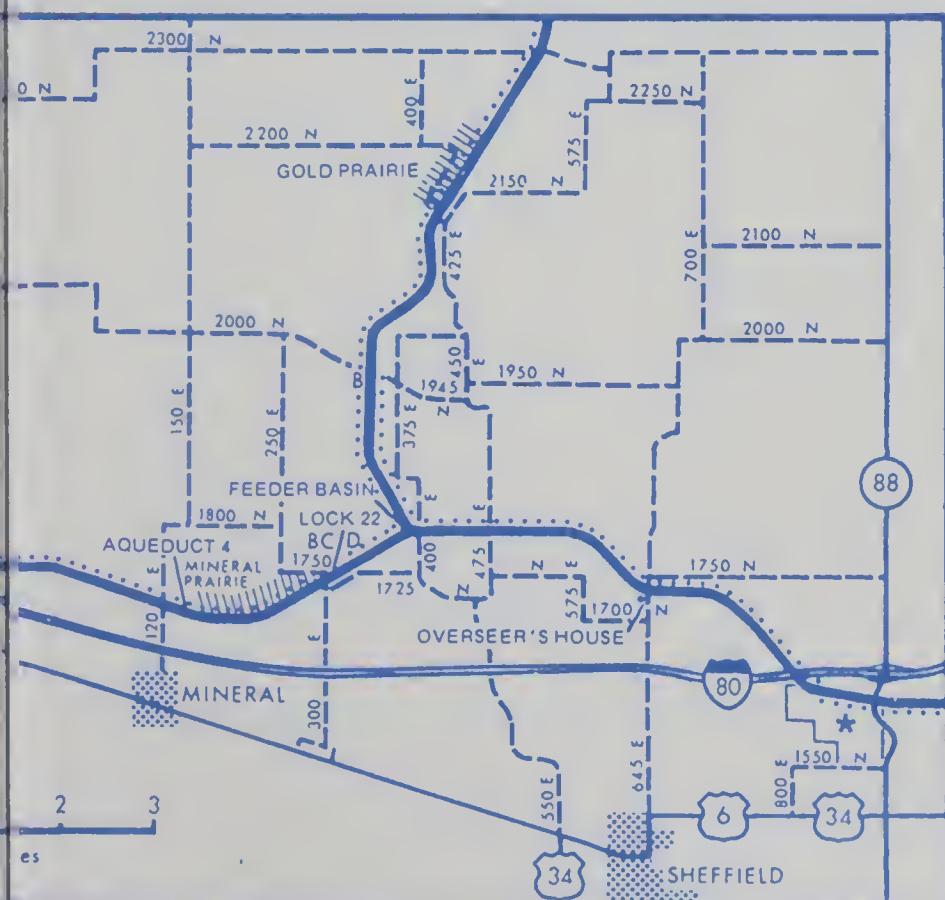
line and north on the feeder. The western portion of the trail ends at Illinois Route 82 north of Geneseo. A boat launch ramp is north of the feeder basin.

A day use area, primitive camping site, and boat launch ramp are on the south canal bank off Illinois Route 78 immediately north of Annawan. Aqueduct 5, in fair condition, is slightly more than one-half mile west and may be reached by the canal towpath. Between the aqueduct and Lock 23 is a canal truss bridge at the southern end of County Road 2570E.

Lock 23 is accessible from either Illinois Route 78 or County Road 2200E north of Atkinson. The lock has been restored to its original condition, and has day use and primitive camping areas. Farther west, midway between County Roads 1950E and 1900E, is Aqueduct 6, which is in fair condition.



*Restored upper gates at Lock 23*



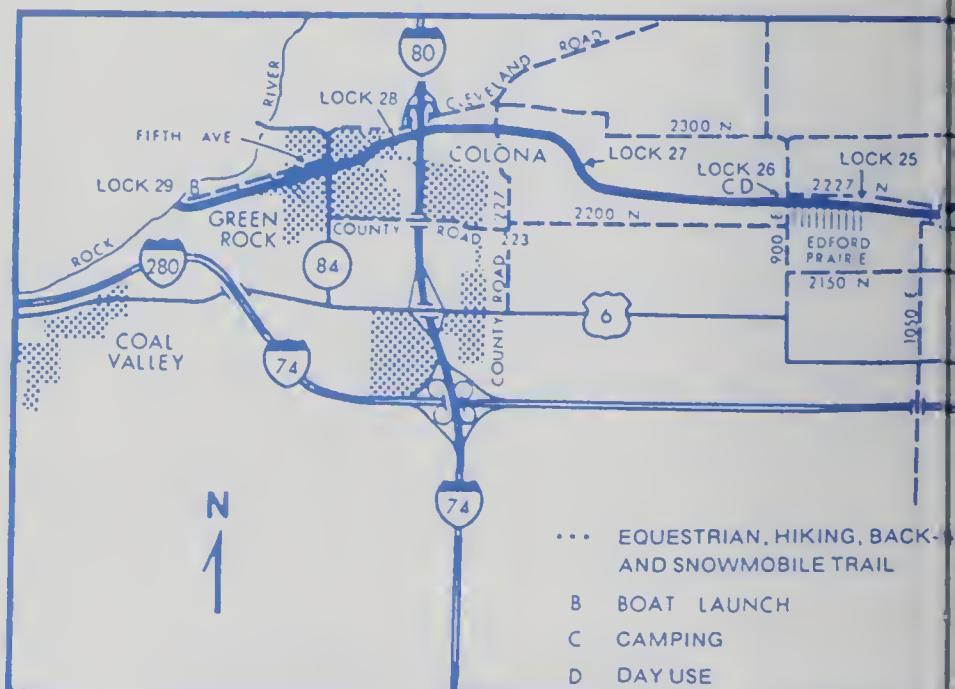
To the east of Geneseo on County Road 1570E is a boat launch ramp. Restored Lock 24 north of Geneseo has a day use area and is accessible from several routes. Approximately one mile west at Illinois Route 82 is the end of the equestrian, hiking, backpacking, and snowmobile trail that extends from the feeder basin. A boat launch ramp is on the south bank at the Illinois Route 82 canal crossing.



Lock 24 day use area

Aqueduct 7, in fair condition, can be reached by the towpath after a one-mile walk from either Illinois Route 82 or County Road 1200E. A boat launch ramp on the north canal bank is west of County Road 1200E.

The best way to reach locks 25 and 26 is from County Road 900E (School Road). Lock 26, approximately one and one-half miles north of U.S. Route 6, has day use and primitive camping areas, and



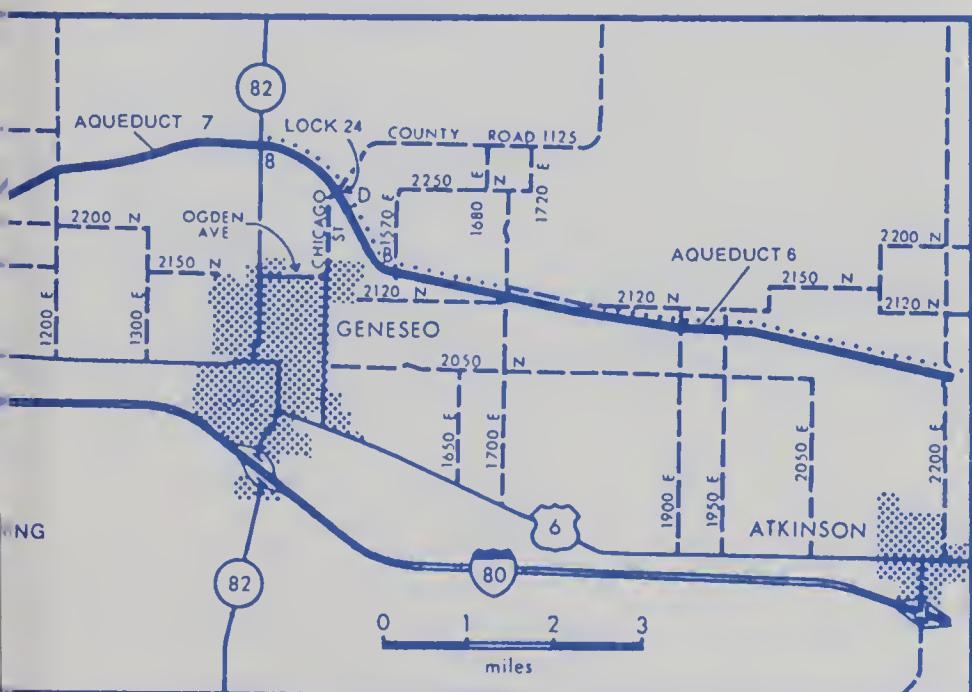
a girder lift bridge on its downstream end. Edford Prairie, a 1.2-acre remnant dominated by little blue-stem, is on the south canal bank between locks 25 and 26.

Lock 27 can be reached only on foot. Aqueduct 8, a short distance upstream from the lock, has been replaced by an inverted syphon that carries canal water under the Green River. There is no trail crossing at this location.

Lock 28 is accessible from Exit 7 (Cleveland) on Interstate Route 80 at Colona or Illinois Route 84. The lock is on Spring Street south of Cleveland Road, and has a park and playground maintained by the city.

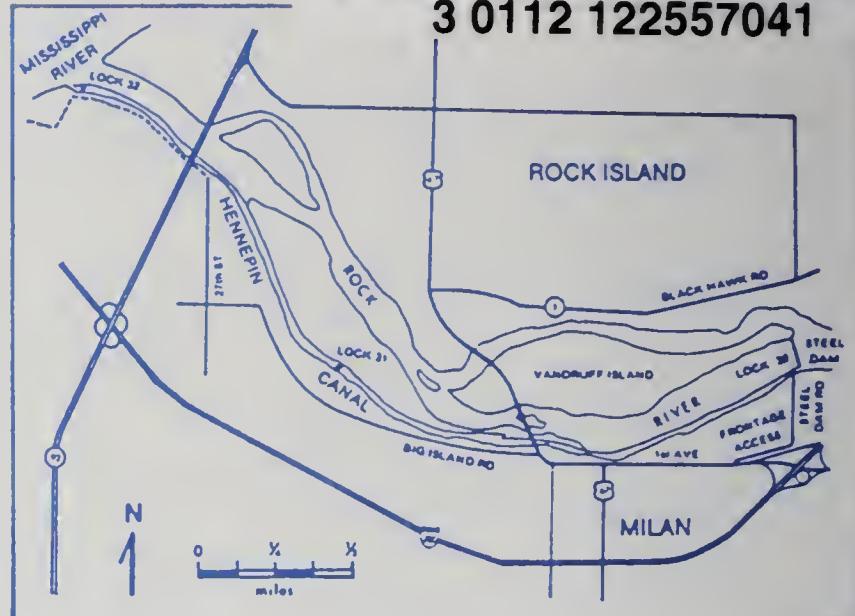
Lock 29 is almost two miles west of the Fifth Avenue-Illinois Route 84 intersection in Green Rock. The site has a boat launch ramp into the Rock River.

The extreme western section of the canal main line begins at Lock 30 east of Milan. The lock can be reached from a frontage road and Steel Dam Road just west of the Interstate Route 280 off ramp. Of special interest at the site are the Steel Dam across the southern channel of the Rock River which helped maintain a reservoir for the canal, and a sluiceway with steel tainter gates that could be hoisted to supply water to the canal downstream from Lock 30. At present, the Lock 30 chamber is filled with earth to block the flow of water from the Rock River. Plans are underway to reintroduce water for the Lock 30-Mississippi River section.





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Milan Area

The original route west of the U.S. Route 67 canal crossing has been modified substantially by a major flood control project. Lock 31 is less than one mile west of U.S. Route 67 on Big Island Road. Still farther downstream, on the extension of Twenty-Seventh Street, the canal joins the Mississippi River at Lock 32.



Lock 32 at the Mississippi River

Johnson Sauk Trail State Park, a short distance from the feeder basin, and Black Hawk State Park in Rock Island offer additional recreational opportunities. Another recreational area within a short distance of the western main line is Prophetstown State Park.

This travel guide was prepared by Donald W. Griffin, Professor of Geography and Director, Institute for Regional, Rural, and Community Studies, Western Illinois University, Macomb, Illinois. Research and cartographic assistance were provided by John A. McFarland, Eric Shields, and Paul Adams, Department of Geography, Western Illinois University. Thanks are due to Steve Moser, Site Superintendent of the Hennepin Canal Parkway, for his comments, suggestions, and, above all, support for the travel guide series.